

The Romantic Age (1798-1837)

Timeline

- 1805—Napoleon is defeated at the Battle of Trafalgar
- 1808—Ludwig van Beethoven composes *Symphony No. 5*
- 1812—War declared on Great Britain by America
- 1814—British forces burn down Washington D.C.
- 1815—Duke of Wellington leads final defeat of Napoleon at Waterloo
- 1818—Friedrich W. Bessel catalogs 3,222 stars
- 1820—William III dies, George IV becomes king
- 1825—Workers in Britain form a labor union
- 1828—First passenger and freight train railroad is constructed in America
- 1828—Noah Webster (American) creates the *American Dictionary of the English Language*
- 1830—William IV ascends the throne
- 1834—Louis Braille perfects system of characters enabling blind to read
- 1835—W.H. Fox Talbot takes the earliest negative photograph
- 1837—Queen Victoria ascends the throne

Political Background

- French Revolution of 1789 (protest against royal despotism) asserted the power of the people; it turned brutal with guillotine executions
- The Napoleonic Wars with France (1793-1815) occur with Napoleon establishing himself as leader of France, as emperor. He is eventually overthrown.
- Through a few kings, eventually under George IV, parliament passes the First Reform Bill of 1832—extended the right to vote (to middle class) and for the first time, Englishman could elect their own leaders.

Life

- The Industrial Revolution destroys home industry
- Children still suffered exploitation because they were a cheap source of labor and easy to discipline and recruit
- Wigs and hair powder are largely gone
- A growing humanitarian feeling began to take root
- Slave trade was made illegal (in 1807), eventually being completely abolished in overseas colonies in 1833.
- Excruciating living conditions still existed in England.

Literature

- Emphasized human adventure, passion, delight, love of splendor, of extravagance, and of the supernatural
- Jean Jacques Rousseau rebelled against the cold logic of the 1700s and championed freedom and experimentation

- *Lyrical Ballads* (a fresh approach to poetry) is the first Romantic publication, written by William Wordsworth and Samuel Taylor Coleridge; the Preface proclaimed the belief that poetry should reflect spontaneity and emotion rather than the sedate and ordered tones of the previous generation
- Other great poets—Percy Bysshe Shelley, Lord Byron, and John Keats
- Drama did not flourish
- Gothic novel develops (the supernatural set against foreboding backgrounds)
- Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*
- Sir Walter Scott's *Ivanhoe*
- Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice*